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ABSTRACT

Harry S. Truman (1884-1972) spent 64 years of his life in Independence, Missouri. The qualities instilled in him there as a child and young adult guided him personally and in his careers as farmer, judge, senator, and President of the United States (1945-53). After leaving public office in 1953, he returned to his hometown to live among the family and neighbors who had always supported him. The house where Truman and his wife shared 53 years of married life is preserved today as the Harry S. Truman National Historic Site. The home and neighborhood help people understand the life and character of the 33rd President. This lesson can be used in U.S. history, social studies, or geography courses in a unit on Truman's presidency; or incorporated in a study of the role of small towns in U.S. society and how notable people are shaped by their early years. The lesson plan contains eight sections: (1) "About This Lesson"; (2) "Getting Started: Inquiry Question"; (3) "Setting the Stage: Historical Context"; (4) "Locating the Site: Maps" (Missouri; Kansas City, Independence, and Grandview, Missouri); (5) "Determining the Facts: Readings" (Years of Growth (1884-1906); Years of Change and Challenges (1906-1934); Harry Truman and National Politics (1935-1952); Retirement Years (1953-1972)); (6) "Visual Evidence: Images" (Harry Truman's Independence; Truman House, 1904; Truman House Today; Courthouse Square, Independence); (7) "Putting It All Together: Activities" (The Place We Call Home; Why Preserve Old Buildings?); and (8) "Supplementary Resources." (BT)



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Harry Truman and Independence, Missouri: "This is Where I Belong"

Teaching with Historic Places
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Harry Truman and Independence, Missouri: "This is Where I Belong"

I've been taking my walks around the city and passing places that bring back wonderful recollections. The Presbyterian Church...where I started to Sunday school at the age of six years, where I first saw a lovely little golden haired girl who is still the lovely lady,...[Bess Wallace Truman]. What a pleasure to be back here at home--once more a free and independent citizen of the gateway city of the old Great West.¹



Harry S Truman (1884-1972) spent 64 years of his life in Independence, Missouri. The qualities instilled in him as a child and young adult here guided him personally as well as in his career as a farmer, judge, senator, and eventually President of the United States (1945-53). After leaving public office in 1953, he returned to his hometown to live among the family and neighbors who had always supported him.

Today, one can follow in the footsteps of the "Man from Missouri" down Independence's tree-lined streets and along routes that President Truman took during his early morning walks. Many of the places that figured in Truman's life remain,



(National Park Service)

including the Presbyterian church where he met his future wife and the county courthouse where he began his political career. The house where Truman and his wife shared 53 years of married life is preserved today as Harry S Truman National Historic Site. The home and neighborhood help us understand the life and character of our 33rd President.

¹ Robert H. Ferrell, ed. *The Autobiography of Harry S Truman* (Boulder, Co.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1980), 109-111.

The lesson is based on the Harry S Truman National Historic Site and the Harry S Truman Historic District, two of the thousands of properties/historic districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Harry S Truman Historic District has been designated a National Historic Landmark.

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About This Lesson

The lesson is based on the National Register of Historic Places registration files for the Harry S Truman National Historic Site, materials from the Harry S Truman Presidential Library, and information from leading biographers. Randy Harmon, former Park Ranger at Harry S Truman National Historic Site, wrote *Harry Truman and Independence, Missouri: "This is Where I Belong."* Jean West, education consultant, and the Teaching with Historic Places staff edited the lesson. TwHP is sponsored, in part, by the Cultural Resources Training Initiative and Parks as Classrooms programs of the National Park Service. This lesson is one in a series that brings the important stories of historic places into classrooms across the country.

Where it fits into the curriculum

Topics: This lesson could be used in American history, social studies, or geography courses in a unit on Truman's presidency. It also could be incorporated in a study of the role of small towns in American society and how notable Americans are shaped by their early years.

Time period: 20th century

See Attached Relevant United States History Standards for Grades 5-12

Objectives for students

- 1) To examine Harry Truman's early years and determine how his upbringing influenced his character.
- 2) To explore Harry Truman's relationship with his family and neighbors in Independence before, during, and after the Presidency.
- 3) To trace Truman's political career from county judge to President and evaluate some of the decisions he made as a politician.
- 4) To consider the value of preserving buildings important to the history of our nation.
- 5) To locate and analyze historic buildings in their own community.

Materials for students

The materials listed below can be photocopied, and distributed to students

- 1) two maps of Independence, Missouri and surrounding region;
- 2) four readings on Harry S Truman's life and career;
- 3) three photographs of the Truman house and historic district;
- 4) one drawing of Truman's neighborhood in Independence.

Visiting the site

The Harry S Truman National Historic Site is made up of two units--one located in Independence and the other in Grandview, Missouri. The Independence home is located at 219 North Delaware Street. Tickets can be purchased at the park visitor center at the corner of Truman Road and Main Street. The visitor center is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. except New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. The Truman farm is located 1/2 mile west of Highway 71 on Blue Ridge Blvd. in Grandview. The farm home is open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from the first Friday in May through the last Sunday in August. The grounds are open for visiting, using a self-guided brochure available onsite, seven days a week all year during daylight hours. For more information, contact the Superintendent, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, 223 North Main Street, Independence, MO 64050, or <http://www.nps.gov/hstr/index.htm>

United States History Standards for Grades 5-12
Harry Truman and Independence, Missouri:
"This is Where I Belong"
relates to the following National Standards for
History:

Era 8: The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)

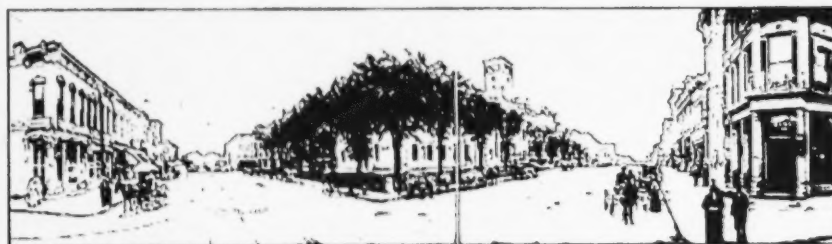
- Standard 3B- The student understands World War II and how the Allies prevailed.

Era 9: Postwar United States (1945 to Early 1970s)

- Standard 2A- The student understands the international origins and domestic consequences of the Cold War.
- Standard 3A- The student understands the political debates of the post-World War II era.

Getting Started

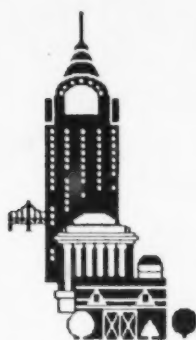
Inquiry Question



(Library of Congress)

What purpose do you think the prominent building shown in the center of the photo was designed to serve?

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Teaching with Historic Places

Photo Analysis Worksheet

Step 1:

Examine the photograph for 10 seconds. How would you describe the photograph?

Step 2:

Divide the photograph into quadrants and study each section individually. What details--such as people, objects, activities--do you notice?

Step 3:

What other information--such as time period, location, season, reason photo was taken--can you gather from the photo?

Step 4:

How would you revise your first description of the photo using the information noted in Steps 2 and 3?

Step 5:

What questions do you have about the photograph? How might you find answers to these questions?

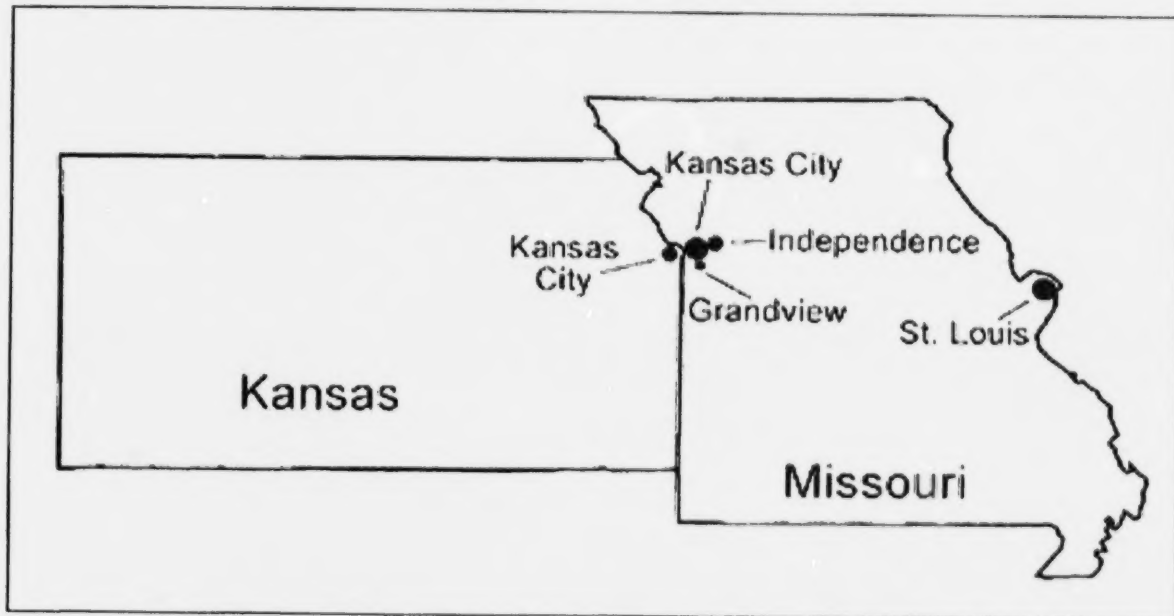
Setting the Stage

In 1953, after a long career in public service culminating in eight years in the White House, Harry S Truman (1884-1972) retired to his beloved hometown of Independence, Missouri. This town and its citizens had a tremendous impact on Truman's character. Truman's parents, schoolteachers, and relatives taught and held him to a high standard of morals and values from early childhood onward. These principles guided him personally as well as in his career as a farmer, judge, senator, and eventually President of the United States (1945-53).

Citizen Truman spent his retirement years continuing to contribute to his town, his country, and the world. He published his memoirs and raised funds to construct his presidential library and museum. On December 26, 1972, the former President died. His wife, Bess, continued to live in their home until she passed away on October 18, 1982. In her will, she left the home and most of its possessions to the people of the United States. In May of the following year, the Federal Government designated the home and the grounds around it the Harry S Truman National Historic Site. Today, the National Park Service preserves the site for present and future generations and interprets the life and hometown community of this Missouri President.

Locating the Site

Map 1: Missouri.



Map 2: Kansas City, Independence, and Grandview, Missouri.



(National Park Service)

In 1890, at the age of six, Harry Truman and his family moved to Independence, Missouri, the county seat of Jackson County. After graduating from high school in 1901, he went to work in nearby Kansas City. Five years later, he left city life behind to help on the 600-acre family farm in Grandview, Missouri. After serving in World War I from 1917 to 1919, he returned home to Independence to marry Bess Wallace. He began his political career in 1922 as eastern Jackson County

judge. He went on to become a United States Senator, Vice President under Franklin D. Roosevelt, and finally President. The home he shared with his wife at 219 Delaware Street served as the Summer White House during his presidency as well as his place of retirement. Both Mr. and Mrs. Truman are buried on the grounds of the nearby Truman Presidential Museum and Library.

Questions for Map 1 & 2

1. Locate Independence on Map 1 and 2. How would you describe its location?
2. Locate Kansas City and Grandview (labeled Truman Farm) on Map 1 and 2. What connection did Harry Truman have with each place? Based on Map 2, approximately how far is each from the Truman Home in Independence?
3. What advantages might living in Independence have offered Truman as he began a political career?
4. Based on what you have learned about Truman's life so far, what evidence have you found of his love for Independence?

Determining the Facts

Reading 1: Years of Growth (1884-1906)

Harry Truman's life began in the small, country town of Lamar, Missouri on May 8, 1884. In 1890 his family moved 120 miles north to the growing community of Independence. The family bought a house at 619 South Chrysler Avenue where Harry made friends, attended school, and did chores.

One reason for moving to Independence was that Harry, his brother, and sister could attend graded schools, rather than the typical country one-room schoolhouse with children of all ages and grades mixed together. In class, Harry studied spelling, reading, literature, language, grammar, penmanship, arithmetic, geography, history, civil government, drawing, music, hygiene or health, and physical culture (physical education). Teachers had a very important impact on young Harry Truman, as he later wrote in his memoirs, "I do not remember a bad teacher in all my experiences. They were all different, of course, but they were the salt of the earth. They gave us high ideals and they hardly ever received more than \$40 a month for it."¹

Harry was very close to his family, especially his mother, who taught him how to read and play the piano. Radio and television were not invented yet, so Harry's family sang and played the piano for entertainment. The young boy also loved to read, especially history books, although his interests were so widespread that he later joked, "There were about three thousand books in the library downtown, and I guess I read them all, including the encyclopedias."² Harry's love of reading continued throughout his life.

In 1896, his family moved to a home on the corner of Waldo Street and River Boulevard. Here, Harry and his childhood friends enjoyed sledding in the winter and fishing in the local rivers during the summer. He remembered, "Our house became headquarters for all the boys and girls around.... There was a wonderful barn with stalls for horses and cows, a corn crib and a hayloft in which all the kids met and cooked up plans for all sorts of adventures...."³

Harry also kept busy with chores, and later, a job. To keep warm in the winter, wood had to be hauled in for the fireplace or stoves. Much of the family's food came from backyard gardens. Even in town, many people kept chickens and dairy cows. Of course homes did not have electricity. Some had gaslights, but most relied on candles and oil lamps. At 14, Harry began his first paying job at Clinton's drugstore on the town square. He received three dollars a week for working there before school and on the weekend.

Throughout high school Harry was an excellent student and loved to learn, especially about history. He wanted to go to college, but his family did not have

the money to send him. So, following his 1901 graduation, he held a series of jobs before moving to Kansas City, where he made a good salary as a bank clerk. In 1906, he left this job and moved back to Grandview, Missouri, to help on his family's farm. He had never farmed before, and it was hard work for someone more used to city life.

Questions for Reading 1

1. How were schools in Independence different from country schools? What subjects did Truman study in school? How are they similar or different from what you study? What was Truman's favorite subject in school?
2. Name some things families did for entertainment in Truman's day.
3. What was Truman's favorite pastime at home? How did having a public library influence his life?
4. Why didn't Truman go to college? Where did he work after high school graduation?
5. Why did Truman move to Grandview, Missouri?

Reading 1 was compiled from Robert H. Ferrell, ed. The Autobiography of Harry S Truman (Boulder, Co.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1980); David G. McCullough, Truman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Merle Miller, Plain Speaking (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1973); and Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, vol. 1, Memoirs by Harry S Truman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1956).

¹ Harry S Truman. Year of Decisions, vol. 1, Memoirs by Harry S Truman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1956), 118.

² Merle Miller. Plain Speaking (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1973), 24.

³ Harry S Truman. Year of Decisions, vol. 1, Memoirs by Harry S Truman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1956), 117.

Determining the Facts

Reading 2: Years of Change and Challenges (1906 - 1934)

While living on the farm in Grandview, Missouri, Truman continued to stay in contact with his friends and relatives in Independence. By 1910, he was dating Bess Wallace, who lived across the street from his aunt and uncle in Independence. He fell in love with Bess during grade school, but both were in their mid twenties by the time they started courting. To visit her, Truman would sometimes travel two hours between his family's Grandview farm and Bess's home on Delaware Street in Independence.

During the couple's courtship, World War I broke out and Truman served in the Army. He received basic training in Oklahoma in the fall of 1917, and "shipped out" to Europe in March of 1918. By the war's end he had been promoted to the rank of captain of his artillery unit and was in command of almost 200 men. Truman experienced all the hardships and terror of war, remembering later, "As a veteran of the First World War, I have seen death on the battlefield ... I know the strain, the mud, the misery, the utter weariness of the soldier in the field."

Returning home safely in the spring of 1919, he married Bess Wallace in Independence at the Trinity Episcopal Church. The couple lived with Bess's mother and younger brother in the Wallace house at 219 Delaware Street. That fall, Harry and a friend from the Army opened a men's clothing store [haberdashery] in downtown Kansas City. Because of economic hard times, the business closed only three years later, in 1922. Although he was \$20,000 in debt, Truman refused to declare bankruptcy and repaid his creditors in full over the course of the next decade.

With the support of family and friends, Truman decided to run for political office in Jackson County. He won the position of eastern county judge in 1922, and served for a four-year term. After losing the race for re-election, Truman ran again in 1926 and became the presiding judge of Jackson County. Although no law degree was required for the position, Truman studied law in night school for three years out of respect for his job and the people he served. Truman worked at the courthouse just a few blocks from his Delaware Street home.

Judge Truman's job was equivalent to that of a county commissioner today, being responsible for the county finances, its budget, and road building. He was determined to see that the voters had good roads, especially in the farming communities of eastern Jackson County. Feeling that every farm should be within 2.5 miles of a paved road, Truman raised \$6.5 million in tax money to build them. He also helped finance the renovation of the courthouse in Independence and a

new courthouse in Kansas City by 1933. During the Great Depression, Truman administered public works projects and created a highly recognized six-county regional plan, which became a model for future town planners.

Truman had been elected judge with the support of Thomas Pendergast's Democratic political organization in Kansas City. At times, this political machine fixed primary elections using vote fraud, then often controlling the government officials it had helped elect through bribes and other illegal methods. Harry witnessed fellow judges taking money for their vote on certain county jobs. Although he was personally honest, he was frustrated and wondered in a private note to himself, "Am I an administrator . . . ? Or am I just a crook to compromise in order to get the job done? You judge I can't."² Truman knew corrupt practices were going on and at times looked the other way to accomplish many of his goals, but he never personally profited from his position as judge. Harry wrote, "I'm not a partner of any of them, and I'll go out poorer in every way than when I came into office."³ Truman neither concealed nor renounced his association with Thomas Pendergast, but conducted himself in public office with such personal integrity that he continued to be elected by his Missouri constituents after the political machine collapsed.

Still, Harry Truman wanted to do even more for the people of Missouri, and not only those from Jackson County. In 1934 he ran for the U.S. Senate, and to his delight, was elected.

Questions for Reading 2

1. How did family and friends in Independence still play a role in Truman's life while he lived in Grandview?
2. What rank did he earn as a soldier in World War I?
3. What type of business did he enter after returning home in 1919?
4. What was the first elected office Truman held? What projects did he complete in this office and how did they affect the people of Jackson County?
5. What political machine helped Truman get elected? How did Truman justify his association with the Pendergast machine? In your opinion, was Truman right to accept help from a corrupt political machine to get elected? Explain your reasoning.

Reading 2 was compiled from notes in the Truman Papers at the Harry S Truman Presidential Library; Robert H. Ferrell, Harry S Truman: A Life (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1994); Alonzo Hamby, Man of the People: A Life of Harry S Truman (New York: Oxford Press, 1995); David G. McCullough, Truman

(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Merle Miller, *Plain Speaking* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1973); and Harry S Truman, *Year of Decisions*, vol. 1, *Memoirs by Harry S Truman* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1956).

¹ Harry S Truman, Broadcast to the Armed Forces of the United States upon his Assumption of Office, April 17, 1945.

² Handwritten manuscript, "Politics. Life, etc." c. 1931, *Pickwick Hotel Papers, Papers as Presiding Judge of the Jackson Co. (Missouri) Court, Harry S Truman Papers, Harry S Truman Presidential Library*, 186.

³ Handwritten manuscript, "Politics. Life, etc." c. 1931, *Pickwick Hotel Papers, Papers as Presiding Judge of the Jackson Co. (Missouri) Court, Harry S Truman Papers, Harry S Truman Presidential Library*, 187.

Determining the Facts

Reading 3: Harry Truman and National Politics (1935-1952)

On January 3, 1935, with Missouri and the nation in the depths of the Great Depression, Harry Truman took the oath of office to become a U.S. Senator. He supported President Roosevelt's New Deal policies to help small businesses, defend labor unions, and fund federal projects that would help revive the country's economy. Truman felt that these programs were not only good for people of the nation and his state, but on a more personal level, that they would also assist his friends and family back in Independence. Harry often wrote letters to them to share information and ask for their support on the tough issues that faced him as Senator. He also corresponded regularly with his wife when she and their daughter, Margaret, returned home to Independence, often for months at a time.

Truman soon realized that the real work done by the Senate "was carried out by unassuming and conscientious men, not by those who managed to get the most publicity."¹ He was a hard-working Senator who applied what he had learned on the local level in the committees on which he served. For example, as a member of the Interstate Commerce Committee, Truman drew on his knowledge of road-building projects in eastern Jackson County to support a nationwide system of good railroads and highways.

One of the most important projects that Senator Truman worked on was the Senate's Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, usually known as the Truman Committee. Its purpose was to stop waste and unfair practices in companies that supplied military contracts for the Federal Government. From March 1941 until Truman left the committee in 1944, it saved U.S. taxpayers millions of dollars. Harry Truman's leadership and hard work had gained the attention of Democratic party leaders and President Roosevelt. The president selected him to be his running mate in 1944 in his unprecedented race for a fourth term. They easily won the fall election and Harry S Truman became the vice-president of the United States.

Truman had been in the job for only 82 days when President Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945. The next day he told the White House news reporters, "I felt like the moon, the stars and all the planets fell on me."² Harry Truman shouldered the weight of the Presidency, including the responsibility of leading the United States to victory in World War II. In the next few months he oversaw the end of the war in Europe, the occupation of defeated Germany, and the formation of the United Nations. He met with Churchill and Stalin at Potsdam. Although he had not

known of its existence when he became President, Truman made the decision to use the atomic bomb to defeat Japan and end World War II.

Even with the end of fighting, international affairs demanded Truman's attention. He instituted the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe and countered Communist expansion (the Truman Doctrine) in Greece and Turkey as well as through the Berlin Airlift. Truman also recognized the new state of Israel.

At home, Truman began the difficult task of converting the U.S. economy from a wartime to a peacetime footing. Problems suppressed through the Depression and the war years surfaced and labor unrest increased. Consequently, few people believed that Truman could win the election campaign of 1948 against Republican candidate Thomas Dewey. Harry Truman decided to take his program directly to the American people and traveled thousands of miles by train during his famous "Whistlestop Campaign."

Truman defeated Dewey and won the election. His second term was dominated by efforts to contain the expansion of Communism. Following the defeat of Nationalist forces, China had become a communist power. In 1950, making what he called his hardest decision, Harry Truman sent American troops to defend South Korea when the communist North invaded it. The United States also formed the NATO alliance to contain Soviet expansion in Europe. However, a new red scare was unleashed in the form of McCarthyism. Domestic labor unrest continued, but the civil rights movement gained support when Truman issued executive orders to desegregate the U.S. armed forces. In 1952, Harry Truman decided not to seek the Presidency again but to return to Independence, a place he thought of often and missed a great deal.

Throughout these turbulent years, the President kept in touch with his friends and family in Independence by writing countless letters. In one to a good friend Ray Wills, who ran a local gas station, Harry urged him, "Take good care of yourself. Union Street and Maple Avenue will not be the same corner unless you are there to make it run." ³

On short trips back home, he thoroughly enjoyed his visits. From 1945 to 1952, the house on Delaware Street had also served as the nation's "Summer White House." Looking past the presidential election campaign of 1952, Harry Truman looked forward to returning home.

Questions for Reading 3

1. What national office did Truman hold before he became Vice President in 1944?
2. Describe Truman's committee work. Which of the committees that he worked on sounds most interesting to you, and why?

3. How did Harry Truman use his experiences in Independence to help him in government? How did he feel about his family and friends in Independence?
4. How did Truman become President of the United States? What challenges did he face and overcome?
5. What was the "Whistlestop Campaign"?
6. What did Truman consider to be his most difficult decision as President? Look over some of the other decisions Truman made. What would have been the most difficult for you, and why? (For more information on decisions made by Truman during his administration, visit the Truman Presidential Museum and Library website referenced in Supplementary Resources.)

Reading 3 was compiled from Robert H. Ferrell, Harry S Truman: A Life (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1994); Richard S. Kirkendall, ed., The Harry S Truman Encyclopedia (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1989); David G. McCullough, Truman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Merle Miller, Plain Speaking (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1973); and Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, vol. 1, Memoirs by Harry S Truman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1956).

¹ Richard S. Kirkendall, ed., *The Harry S Truman Encyclopedia* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1989), 325.

² David G. McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 353.

³ Letter, Harry S Truman to Ray Wills, Washington, D.C., May 26, 1948, #3193, *Truman Papers, Harry S Truman Presidential Library*.

Determining the Facts

Reading 4: The Retirement Years

(1953-1982)

On January 20, 1953, after watching Dwight D. Eisenhower take the oath of office as the 34th President of the United States, private citizen Harry S Truman boarded an afternoon train for Missouri. Two days later, when they pulled into the Independence railroad depot, Harry and Bess Truman were welcomed by 10,000 of their fellow townspeople. The number of well wishers overwhelmed the couple, and Mrs. Truman commented as several thousand more greeted them at 219 North Delaware, "If this is what you get for all those years of hard work I guess it was worth it."¹

As they settled back into their private life at home, they adopted a daily routine. Harry rose at 5:30 and read his first newspaper and the previous day's mail. Before breakfast he would take a walk to stay fit, continuing a habit that he had started as a Senator in Washington. Strolling through the neighborhood at a quick rate of 120 paces a minute, he found great pleasure in exchanging greetings with neighbors along the way. At times, he would stop for an informal chat with family friends. On returning to his home, the former President might pose for a picture or sign an autograph for the many tourists and well wishers who waited for him there. He enjoyed the chance to meet new people from all walks of life, commenting that "There are always people waiting at the front gate when I leave for my walk and others there when I return. I think I'd miss them, though, if no one showed up."² After his walk, he would have a quiet breakfast with Bess at their kitchen table. Even though Harry Truman had left public office, he continued to be active. At approximately 8:15 a.m., the former President would drive eight miles to his office at the Federal Reserve Bank building in Kansas City. During his first three years of his retirement, he wrote his presidential memoirs and raised the funds to build the Harry S Truman Presidential Library in Independence. When the library opened in 1957, within walking distance of his home, he moved his office into the new facility.

Harry and Bess Truman lived very quiet, private lives. Harry Truman would return from the office at 3:00 p.m. each day. He might find his wife playing cards on the back porch with her bridge club. After visiting with the ladies or reading in the study, Harry would go upstairs for a nap, a daily practice prescribed by his doctor. Upon waking up, he and Mrs. Truman would telephone their daughter, Margaret, at her home in New York City. The couple would dine around 6:00 p.m. Evenings might be spent chatting with visitors either inside or out on the pleasant screened-in back porch. He also liked to play the piano in the music room or listen with Bess to favorite records of classical music. The Trumans' favorite

after-dinner activity was reading in their library/study. His favorite topics were histories, biographies, and books on political subjects, while she enjoyed mysteries.

Famous guests who visited the couple at home included Presidents Hoover, Johnson, and Nixon. After the 1957 dedication of the Truman Library, former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt visited the couple. Hollywood celebrities such as Jack Benny, Bob Hope, and Henry Fonda also chatted with the Trumans in their front living room.

Harry Truman died at the Kansas City Research Hospital on December 26, 1972 at the age of 88. Mrs. Truman continued to live in their home where Presidents Ford and Carter both called on her. Mrs. Truman passed away quietly on October 18, 1982 at the age of 97. She was buried next to her husband in the courtyard of the Truman Library.

In her will, Mrs. Truman left the 14-room Victorian style home--built by her paternal grandfather in 1885--and most of her possessions to the people of the United States, to be cared for by the Federal Government. In 1983, Congress established Harry S Truman National Historic Site, to be administered by the National Park Service. Park rangers give tours of the home for 50,000 to 60,000 annual visitors. Park Service staff take care of the home, furnishings, and personal possessions of Harry S Truman and Bess Wallace Truman. Much of the collection of more than 50,000 objects remains in the Truman home to help visitors understand what home life was like for the Trumans. Furnishings include furniture and household accessories belonging to the Trumans and to Bess Truman's extended family. Personal possessions include the Trumans' library of books, phonograph record collection, photographs, clothing, and Harry Truman's last automobile. The museum collection also includes historic fabric and architectural samples removed from the Truman home during restoration and archeological materials recovered from the property.

In 1972, to recognize the importance of the area that had such a large impact on this First Family, the Department of Interior designated the neighborhood around the Truman Home, as the Harry S Truman Historic District, National Historic Landmark. Today this area looks very similar to the way it did when the Truman family lived here. Along with their home, this area serves as a living legacy to the "Trumans of Independence."

Questions for Reading 4

1. How did the people of their hometown react to the Trumans when they returned from the White House to Independence? Why do you think this reaction was important to them?

2. Describe what life was like for the Trumans after returning from the White House to Independence. How did their pastimes reflect the things they enjoyed doing? After the excitement of the Presidency, why do you think they enjoyed this lifestyle?
3. Although they enjoyed privacy, give examples of how the Trumans also enjoyed interacting with other people.
4. When did Harry and Bess Truman die? Where are they buried?
5. What happened to the Truman home after Mrs. Truman died? Who preserves the home today?
6. How do you think the furnishings and other pieces from the museum collection contribute to the visitor's experience of the house? How do you think they contribute to historians' understanding of Truman's life?
7. Today the neighborhood around the Truman residence looks much the same way it did when the Trumans lived in Independence. What does preserving an entire neighborhood teach us that a single preserved structure cannot?

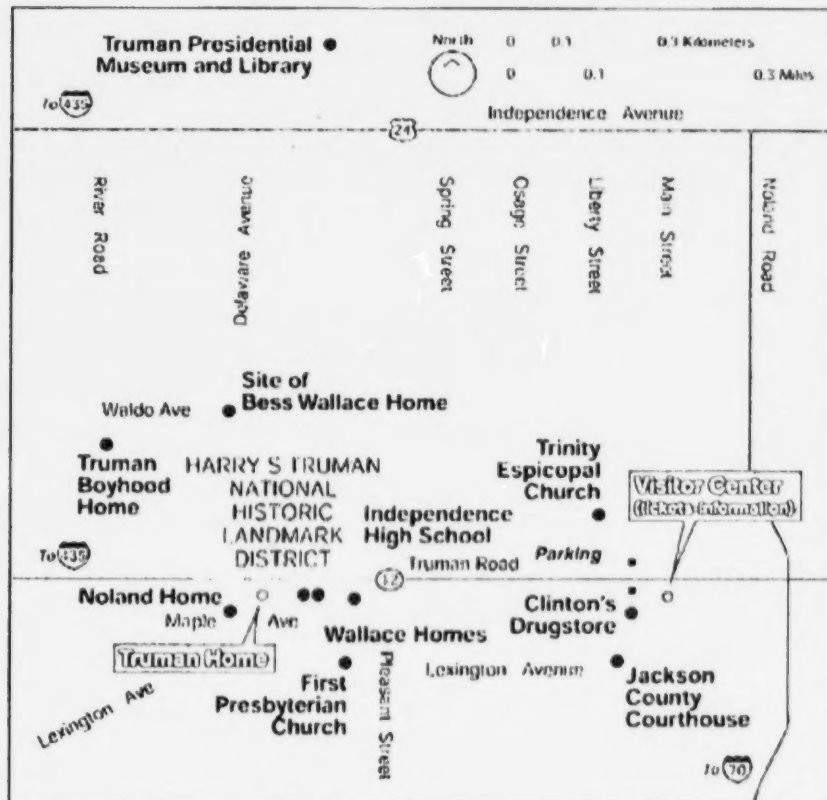
Reading 4 was compiled from correspondence in the Truman Papers at the Truman Presidential Library; Robert H. Ferrell, Harry S Truman: A Life (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1994); Richard S. Kirkendall, ed. The Harry S Truman Encyclopedia (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1989); David G. McCullough, Truman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Merle Miller, Plain Speaking (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1973); Charles Robbins, Last of His Kind: An Informal Portrait of Harry S Truman (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1979); Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen (New York: Bernard Geis Associates, 1960); and Margaret Truman, Harry S Truman (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1972)

¹ Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen (New York: Bernard Geis Associates, 1960), 24.

² Charles Robbins, Last of His Kind: An Informal Portrait of Harry S Truman (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1979), photo section.

Visual Evidence

Drawing 1: Harry Truman's Independence.



(National Park Service)

Before and after returning to Independence in 1953, one of Harry Truman's favorite activities was his early morning walk. These walks helped him to remember his life in Independence and to connect to his town. Truman explained:

I've been taking my walks around the city and passing places that bring back wonderful recollections.... I pass by Noland School where I first went to school in 1892. Just south of this building stood the old Columbian School, which was brand-new when I was ready for the third and fourth grade. The Ott School over on Liberty and College where I was in the fifth grade under Aunt Nanny Wallace--Bess's aunt. I pass the site of the old Independence High School [now Palmer Junior High on this site] at Maple and Pleasant. Ours [Bess and Harry's] was the

first class to be graduated there, in 1901, fifty-two years ago. And so it goes. What a pleasure to be back here at home--once more a free and independent citizen of the gateway city of the old Great West.¹

Drawing 1 Key:

The Truman Home - The house at 219 Delaware Street was the home to Harry S Truman and his wife, Bess Wallace Truman, from the time of their marriage in 1919 until their deaths in the 1972 and 1982, respectively. The house was built in 1885 by Bess Wallace's grandparents.

The First Presbyterian Church - In 1890, six-year-old Harry Truman met Bess Wallace in Sunday school class at this church.

Independence High School - Harry Truman and Bess Wallace graduated from this school in 1901.

Trinity Episcopal Church - Harry S Truman married Bess Wallace at Trinity Episcopal on June 28, 1919. The church was also the site of the 1956 wedding of their daughter, Margaret.

Jackson County Courthouse - Harry S Truman presided as administrative judge for Jackson County from an office and courtroom in this courthouse from 1926-1934.

Harry S Truman Library - Completed in 1957, the Truman Presidential Library houses papers and museum exhibits about Truman's life and presidency. He maintained an office at the library until his death in 1972. Harry S Truman and Bess Wallace Truman are buried in the courtyard of the library.

Harry S Truman National Historic Landmark District - Established to recognize the important relationship between Truman and his neighborhood.

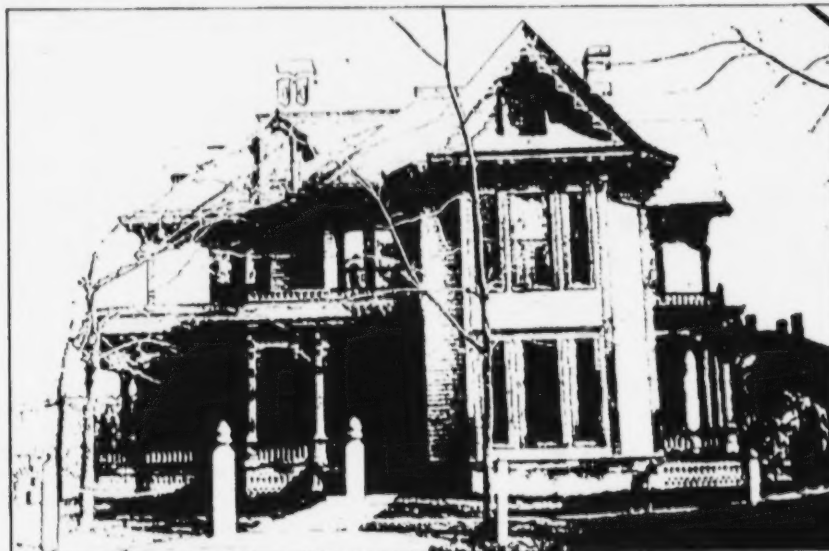
Questions for Drawing 1

1. Locate some of the important sites of Harry Truman's life: Trinity Episcopal Church, the Truman Home, First Presbyterian Church, Independence High School, Jackson County Courthouse, and Harry S Truman Library. Arrange a list of the sites as they might appear in a chronology or timeline of Harry Truman's life.
2. Estimate the distance Harry Truman would have walked to and from his office at the Truman Library. Do you think Truman's daily walks helped to contribute to his physical and mental fitness during his retirement? Why?
3. Trace the outline of the Harry S Truman National Historic Landmark District. Why was it established? What are some of the places it recognizes?

¹ Robert H. Ferrell, ed. *The Autobiography of Harry S Truman* (Boulder, Co.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1980), 109-111.

Visual Evidence

Photo 1: The Truman House, 1904.



(Harry S Truman Presidential Library)

Photo 2: The Truman House today.



(Photographed by Keith Drews)

Questions for Photos 1 and 2

1. Compare the two photos. What has changed and what has remained the same?
2. How would you describe the house?
3. Who lived in this house when Photo 1 was taken? (You may need to refer back to the readings and Map 2 key.) Why might the Trumans have moved into the Wallace house upon their marriage?

Visual Evidence

Photo 3: Courthouse Square, Independence, Missouri, 1909.



(Library of Congress)

Photo 3 shows the Independence town square and the Jackson County Courthouse. It was here that Harry Truman began his political career as a county judge.

Questions for Photo 3

1. List three facts about life in Independence in the early 20th century that you can determine by looking at the photograph. Where was Truman living when this photo was taken?
2. Why was the Jackson County courthouse located in Independence? When did Harry Truman work in the courthouse? (You may want to refer back to the readings and Map 2 key.)
3. What types of cases are heard at a county courthouse? What other type of work is conducted at a county courthouse? (Refer to Reading 2 for additional information).

Putting It All Together

Harry S Truman's life serves as an example of civic duty. Always seeing himself as a public servant, he became a leader whose decisions made a real difference in this country and around the globe and which continue to affect our lives today. The following activities help students to explore the interaction of community and the common, as well as the great people, of America's past, present, and future.

Activity 1: The Place We Call Home

Explain to students that the homes and neighborhoods where we have lived help create who we are in the present, and who we will become in the future. Sometimes, opportunities exist to revisit our past. To return to a former house or neighborhood reminds us of where we came from and who influenced our lives. It enables us to have a better understanding of who we are as individuals, and as part of a larger community.

1. Each one of us has a place we consider home. Have the students discuss what "home" means to them. Ask them to draw a picture of their home and explain what makes it special to them.
2. Ask students to compare their neighborhoods to the one that President Truman lived in for most of his life. Discuss similarities and differences between their surroundings and his in Independence.
3. The neighborhoods surrounding our homes also influence our lives. Ask students to take a walk through their neighborhood. Direct them to take notes on who lives around them and what types of businesses or shops are nearby. Have students draw a map of their neighborhood.
4. Ask students to use their notes to write an essay about what makes this area important to them. They should discuss the things that are good about their neighborhood and the things that are bad.
5. Harry Truman was always interested in making his hometown better. Ask the students to design and undertake a project to improve their own neighborhood. Projects might include: a local cleanup project, planting trees, starting a community garden, or visiting elderly family friends or relatives to learn about local history.

Activity 2: Why Preserve Old Buildings?

Explain to students that Harry Truman loved history. He understood that historical events in the past could help shape events in the present and future. Truman also felt strongly about preserving the history of our states, towns, and local neighborhoods. Before and after his time in the White House, he was involved in various organizations that preserved local history in his hometown of Independence. In 1926, he was elected president of the National Old Trails Organization. After returning home from Washington, he helped to establish a local chapter of the Civil War Roundtable, as well as the Jackson County Historical Society. Realizing that developers were threatening the integrity of his hometown neighborhood, the former President also showed his support in the effort to save private residences near his home.

It is much easier to understand and explain our past if we keep physical reminders of it. These include such individual structures such as homes, but also intact whole neighborhoods. A real sense of "place" can then be preserved for future generations to learn from and appreciate. The former President knew this when he helped to establish the Harry S Truman National Historic District, National Historic Landmark in his neighborhood.

1. Ask students if any of them have lived their entire lives in a single area. Since most will not have, ask them why it's important to learn about the neighborhood in which they presently live.
2. Ask students to go out into their neighborhood and look at an old building. Have them take pictures to document their findings. Ask them what they can find out simply by looking at it. Can it tell them when it was built or for what purpose? Can it tell them any stories of who lived or worked there?
3. If possible, have them follow up their visit by conducting an interview with someone who lived or worked in the building. Or, ask them to conduct research at the library's local history section, the community historical society, or county or parish courthouse to learn more about the structure. Ask students to share their findings in a class presentation; either with an illustrated talk or a computer slide (Power Point) presentation.

Harry Truman and Independence, Missouri: "This is Where I Belong"-- Supplementary Resources

By working with *Harry S Truman and Independence, Missouri: "This is where I Belong,"* students will learn about the 33rd President of the United States and the town which helped to form his character. Those interested in learning more will find that the Internet offers a variety of interesting materials.

Harry S Truman National Historic Site <http://www.nps.gov/hstr/index.htm>
Harry S Truman National Historic Site is a unit of the National Park Service. The park's Web pages are an excellent resource for information about Harry S Truman's life and accomplishments.

National Park Service--Museum Management Program
American Visionary: Harry S Truman
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/hstr/>
This informative online exhibit explores the life of Harry S Truman through treasured belongings and political memorabilia from the Harry S Truman National Historic Site museum collections and supplemental photographs from the Truman Library. Included as part of this unique learning experience is a virtual reality tour of several rooms from his home in Independence, MO.

Truman Presidential Museum and Library <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/>
The Truman Presidential Museum and Library has chronologies, a kids' page, and an online archives including transcriptions of oral histories of Truman associates, and photographs of Harry Truman's life and times.

Project Whistlestop <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/educatio.htm>
Project WhistleStop was funded by a five-year education technology challenge grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This grant expired, but the content of Project WhistleStop is now being underwritten and hosted by the Truman Presidential Library and Museum. This project provides teachers and students with abundant archival material about Harry S Truman including audio files, cartoons, photographs, and a digital archive of written documents ranging on subjects from Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb to his executive order desegregating the U.S. armed forces.

Kansas City Public Library <http://www.kclibrary.org/index.cfm>
The Kansas City Public Library has a number of online resources that help researchers understand the Missouri context of Harry Truman's life including biographies of people he knew, such as the Pendergasts, and

photographs detailing the construction of the Kansas City Courthouse, one of Truman's undertakings. The Library also has a useful general information guide on how to research the history of your house. Use the search engine to find these resources.

Library of Congress <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/mdbquery.html>

Search the American Memory Collection for a variety of resources on Harry S Truman (also search "Truman, Harry S") including documentation (with photos) by the NPS Historic American Building Survey on his home in Missouri, presidential portraits, documents associated with his presidency, and much more.

American Presidents, Life Portraits

<http://www.americanpresidents.org/presidents/president.asp?PresidentNumber=32>

In this series, C-SPAN explores the life stories of the men who have been president by traveling to presidential homes, museums, libraries, and grave sites and speaking with presidential scholars. Included on the website is information about the American President, Harry S Truman.

The White House

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/ht33.html>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/firstladies/et33.html>

The White House website provides a biographical sketch of Harry S Truman and Elizabeth Virginia Wallace Truman, as well as a copy of Truman's Inaugural Address.



*U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*



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